

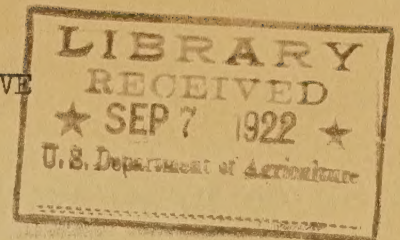
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Aug 24, 1922

NATIONAL UNION
FARMERS EDUCATIONAL AND CO-OPERATIVE
UNION OF AMERICA

Office of Secretary-Treasurer



Gravette, Ark., August 24, 1922.

Hon. Henry Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture,
Washington, D. C.,

Mr. Secretary:

At a conference which you granted to the officials of the National Farmers Union about June 20, I filed, at your request, some correspondence bearing upon the activities of Extension force people with the Farm Bureau Federation. The understanding was that these letters were to be returned to this office. I will appreciate your seeing that this is done.

During the progress of the conference referred to, you made a statement substantially as follows, "No member of the state Extension forces, nor any County Agent part of whose compensation comes from the Federal Government, has authority to solicit membership in any farm organization nor even in a commodity marketing organization. Upon evidence of such being done, the Department will stop the Federal appropriation to such person or persons."

As we understand the matter, the Department through its field forces is anxious to encourage co-operation in marketing among farmers but feels that the selection of the particular kind of vehicle for such marketing should be left to the farmers concerned, and that the Federal employees should not attempt to boost whatever happens to be their pet hobby.

In view of this understanding, it is more than passing strange that whenever the Farm Bureau makes a drive for membership, including membership in the State and National Federation a farm organization, there is always with them a crowd of tax paid employees, boosting for the Bureau and passing out contracts for commodity marketing schemes calling for the payment of a certain sum of money for a certain number of years. These contracts are signed by numbers of farmers who are deluded into believing that the money they pay into the thing goes to support whatever kind of commodity association is being formed, only to wake up later to the realization that a farm organization has been sold them and not a marketing plan. That they must formulate their own marketing organization and provide for the expense.

Here is a specific case in this state. It chanced that the fore part of August I passed through White county. The Manager or some official of the Berry Growers Association at McRae asked me to stop and see him. He explained that one McNutt of the Extension force in this state and some one representing the Farm Bureau came to McRae and signed up a large percent of the growers upon a five year contract charging \$10 per member for five years. After the excitement was over and the orators had gone they began to examine into the thing and found that they had simply agreed to pay into the Farm Bureau Federation the sum of \$10 each year for five years, that in exchange for this \$10 they each received a sheet of paper with some printing thereon. Quite a group of men gathered on the street as we discussed the matter and with one or two exceptions they were not only disappointed but were good and mad at themselves for being thus caught in a trap.

I talked as best I could in favor of commodity marketing and urged them to proceed with their marketing upon the contract basis, but I had not then and have not now any defense for the underhand methods by which the Bureau was slipped over on them. These small associations in the White County territory were planning to form a general association under one management and the Bureau people aided by the Extension forces simply took advantage of the situation to land a farm organization upon them.

My understanding is that a recent attempt to organize in a similar way at Beebe failed as it justly deserved to do.

There is a letter on file in my office from a gentleman in Louisiana stating that when the County Agent of a certain Parish was called on the carpet for organizing the Farm Bureau he offered in defense and read a letter from the head of the state Extension forces requesting the County Agents to organize the Farm Bureau.

From communications received from many parts of the country, I get the impression that there is a very general determination among the Department employees to boost the Farm Bureau Federation and to discredit all other farm organizations, and this in spite of your expressed attitude upon the subject.

The thing which will soon prove to be the most damaging to the Department is that in most instances this Bureau proposition is put over as a Governmental Agency. Naturally farmers get this notion by seeing Government agents backing it so strenuously, whether such a statement is made in so many words or not.

Intelligent farmers are beginning to ask questions about the origin, aims, and objects of this much heralded organization that is to prove the Moses of Agriculture.

When they read in the report of the Agriculture Conference held in January, that the Chicago Board of Trade advanced \$100,000 to start the Bureau they put a question mark.

When they learn from the hearings before the House Committee on Banking and Currency that the Curtis Publishing Company spent more than a half million advertising the Bureau, they put a question mark.

When they note the Editorial in the Country Gentleman advising the officials of the Bureau to destroy the old farm organizations by riding over them rough shod or by buying out the leaders they put a question mark.

When they note the activities of the Legislative agents of the Bureau Federation in support of the Ech-Cummins law they put a question mark.

When the National President of the Federation claiming to hold a brief for all Agriculture speaks in favor of a ship Subsidy they put a question mark.

When the U. S. Grain Growers Inc., the pet of the Bureau and the savior of the grain people, makes such a mess that it has to be taken over bodily by a member of the Board of Trade they put a question mark.

When the Committee of Fifteen opens its first Live Stock Commission House in direct competition with one affiliated with the Farmers Union which is now operating eight such houses they put a question mark.

When Chambers of Commerce pay for great adds urging farmers to join the Farm Bureau Federation another question mark is placed.

When farmers note the activities of Legislative agents of the Bureau meeting with packer representatives to frame packer control legislation which would be "mutually satisfactory", they put a question mark.

When cotton producers see veiled behind their cotton associations the hand of old line commission firms they put a question mark.

The simple truth is that the belief is becoming fairly general among farmers that the Farm Bureau Federation is the child of special interests in this country who thought they saw in the determination of farmers to organize and co-operate a menace to their vested interests, and that to offset such a calamity to themselves a nice little Lord Fauntleroy of an organization would be properly labeled and handed out to the American farmer.

The time was ripe for launching the National Federation. Everybody was howling himself hoarse about the importance of agriculture, we must conserve our agriculture etc. The war has demonstrated the strategic position occupied by agriculture in America therefore we must encourage the farmer but of course see to it that he does not fully discover his power and go too far.

The point of the whole matter is this, can the Department of which you are the head afford to stand sponsor for this movement? As stated previously, it is now looked upon in many quarters as an authorized Departmental agency whether the Department wills it or not.

Farmers are not in the mood to be played with. There is no profit in any department of the industry. Under existing conditions, they are beginning to wonder whether the vast sums expended in support of those agencies purporting to aid them in solving their problems are really worth while. If they continue to vote for the support of those agencies they certainly have the right to be protected by the Department from all forms of graft that is being put over as an alleged government organization.

The Farmers Union is not alarmed for its existence by any means. In spite of the oratory and the advertising the Bureau has not swallowed the old organizations, neither will they do so. We have too many millions invested in co-operative institutions to be pushed off the map as though we did not exist. But we do insist that the game as now being played by the Federal employees is an injustice to all self helped farm organizations and we intend to agitate the matter until there is a complete divorcement of the Department and the Bureau Federation.

From public expressions which you have made prior to and since becoming the Secretary, people generally understand your attitude toward organizations and appreciate your hearty support of those things tending to make agriculture a profitable industry. This seems to be a case where subordinates are going ahead upon their own judgment regardless of the views of their superior.

If this Farm Bureau Federation has merit it will live without the aid and support of the Department, if it has none it deserves to perish, therefore upon behalf of American farmers generally, I respectfully request that you use your good offices to stop tax paid employees of the Department from promoting any farm organization.

This letter is in no sense confidential but will be published in our official papers to advise our membership of our position with reference to this matter.

Very respectfully yours,

A. B. Davis
Secretary-Treasurer.

...in any department of the industry. Under existing conditions, they are beginning to wonder whether the vast sums expended in support of foreign business organizations to aid them in solving their problems are really worth while. If they continue to wait for the support of these agencies they certainly have the right to be gratified if the Department does all it can to make it plain that it will not over an assumed permanent organization. The Bureau itself is not asked for the existence of any agency. In spite of the agency and the advertising the Bureau has not overlooked the old organizations, neither will they do so. We have for many years invested in co-operative laboratories to be made out the way as shown in the old text. But we do insist that the work be done as well as shown in the Federal Archives is at present in all ways a good thing. It is not as if we should be without the water supply there as a complete abandonment of the Department and the Bureau's jurisdiction. From public attention which you have been given to and since becoming the Secretary, I have generally maintained very close relations toward organizations and agencies your hearty support of those which are working to make organizations a profitable industry. This seems to be a case where unscrupulous are going ahead upon their own judgment regardless of the views of their supporters. It is this fact alone that has made it all the more difficult to aid and support of the Department. If it has none it deserves to perish, therefore your desire of American business generally, I respectfully request that you use your good offices to give the said employees of the Department their proper and just compensation. This latter is in no sense essential, and will be satisfied in our official reports to advise the membership of the position with reference to this matter.

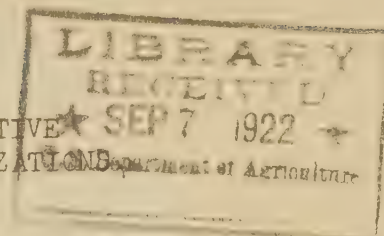
Very respectfully yours,

D. L. Davis
Secretary-Treasurer

198150
Aug 28 1922
Release - Immediate.

August 25, 1922.

STATEMENTS OF THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
CONCERNING THE RELATION OF FEDERAL COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION EMPLOYEES TO AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS



The Act of Congress approved May 8, 1914, and supplemental acts thereto, established cooperative agricultural extension work between the Federal Department of Agriculture and State agricultural colleges. Section 2 of that Act defines the work as follows:

"Sec. 2. That cooperative agricultural extension work shall consist of the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities, and imparting to such persons information on said subjects through field demonstrations, publications, and otherwise; and this work shall be carried on in such manner as may be mutually agreed upon by the Secretary of Agriculture and the State agricultural college or colleges receiving the benefits of this act."

It is thus made clear that the work of the cooperative extension employees, whether county agents, home demonstration agents, boys and girls club agents, or other cooperative extension workers, is educational. These extension workers are public teachers paid with money largely raised from all of the people by taxation and are charged with giving instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics. Their work covers the entire rural field, which includes economic production, economic marketing, and the development of better home, community and social conditions.

As they are public teachers it is not a part of the official duties of extension agents to perform for individual farmers or for organizations the actual operations of production, marketing, or the various activities necessary to the proper conduct of business or social organizations. They may not properly act as organizers for farmers' associations; conduct membership campaigns; solicit membership; edit organization publications; manage cooperative business enterprises; engage in commercial activities; act as financial or

business agents, nor take part in any of the work of farmers' organizations, or of an individual farmer, which is outside of their duties as defined by the law and by the approved projects governing their work. They are expected, however, to make available to organizations such information as will be helpful to them and contribute to the success of their work.

The various Federal laws provide that cooperative extension work shall be conducted in such manner as shall be mutually agreed upon by the Secretary of Agriculture and the State agricultural colleges. By an agreement between these agencies an extension director located in each State is the representative of both the college and the Department. He submits projects for extension work to the Secretary for approval.

In carrying out these projects the law provides that no Federal Smith-Lever money, except \$10,000 per State shall be paid to the States for cooperative extension work until

" * * an equal sum has been appropriated for that year by the legislature of such State, or provided by State, county, college, local authority, or individual contributions from within the State, for the maintenance of the cooperative agricultural extension work provided for in this act."

Under a later act provision was made that

" * * moneys contributed from such outside sources * * shall be paid only through the Secretary of Agriculture or through State, county or municipal agencies, or local farm bureaus or like organizations, cooperating for the purpose with the Secretary of Agriculture."

This makes it very clear that the law contemplates cooperation with farmers' organizations willing to cooperate in the work with which the cooperative extension agent is charged. It is the duty of the extension agents to render such assistance whenever possible in his teaching capacity to any agricultural organizations desiring it. Furthermore, the work of these extension agents can be the most effective where it is carried on with organized groups of rural people. It is entirely proper for any agricultural

organization desiring to cooperate financially in the work of the extension agents to contribute funds for the support of such work, and these funds may be accepted legally by the extension service of the agricultural colleges and by the Federal Government for work on approved projects.

In short, it is the business of the extension agent to cooperate with all agricultural organizations which desire to cooperate on approved projects. If more than one organization exists in a county he must cooperate with all fairly and impartially in the educational work in which they are mutually interested.

The Department of Agriculture must necessarily consider in its administration of Federal cooperative extension funds the laws which have been passed by the various State legislatures in accepting these funds and under which agreements have been made with those States for conducting this work. If special provisions relating to the methods of cooperation with agricultural organizations or other agencies are contained in the State laws, which do not conflict with the Federal laws, it is clearly the duty of the Secretary of Agriculture to accept such provisions in a cooperative project.

Benny Wallace

Secretary of Agriculture..

